
InCommon



**Impact
Report**

2021/22

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Foreword

In July, we celebrated InCommon's fifth birthday, and with it came the news that our application to become a charity had been successful. The creation of the InCommon Foundation marks a major milestone for us, enabling us to make more impact, protect our social mission, and reach even more older and younger people in the years to come. We're excited to be entering our first full year of bringing generations together as a charity, and we look forward to publishing a comprehensive annual report as a charity next October.

In these pages, we look back on the year just gone. In September 2021, our flagship programme – InCommon Connect – entered its fourth annual cycle. Following two years of facilitating long distance and remote connections between people of different ages, we were able to make a gradual return to in-person intergenerational work in the Spring. It was a pleasure to put our screens to one side and bring our participants into shared spaces again.

We also delivered the second year of our Social Action programme, inviting younger and older people up and down the country to tackle the issues affecting their communities, and to reimagine what their shared future might look like. This

year, we recruited a dedicated Programme Manager to run our Social Action strand, which she will continue to grow into the new academic year.

Finally, with funding from Innovate UK, we have been able to pilot a digital platform that allows primary schools and retirement homes to access our resources and deliver their own intergenerational projects. In the long term, we anticipate that this model will enable us to scale our social impact, while creating more sustainable, community-led connections.

We hope that you'll enjoy learning more about our work and its impact in the pages that follow.

Laura Macartney & Charlotte Whittaker
Co-founders & Directors

Kirsty Allerton

Kirsty Allerton
Interim Chair of the Board of Trustees

October 2022

The evidence behind our work



INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION BENEFITS OUR COMMUNITIES

Studies have found that regular contact with children can improve physical and mental health among older people, while reducing social isolation and improving trust within communities. (See United for All Ages publications [‘Mixing Matters’](#), 2018, and [‘The Next Generation’](#), 2019.)



VOLUNTEERING IMPROVES OLDER PEOPLE’S WELLBEING

At InCommon, older people volunteer their time to support children and young people. Recent research has shown that volunteering improves older people’s sense of wellbeing and social connection, particularly for those with fewer existing relationships, lower levels of income and education, and poorer health. (See Centre for Better Ageing: [‘The State of Ageing’](#), 2019.)



FRIENDSHIP ACROSS GENERATIONS SUCCESSFULLY REDUCES AGEISM

Evidence suggests that negative ideas about ageing begin to develop as young as 6 years old. Friendships across generations are the most effective and reliable form of contact for reducing ageism. (See Royal Society for Public Health: [‘That Age Old Question’](#), 2018.)

The year at a glance

On our programmes:

199

OLDER PEOPLE

277

YOUNG PEOPLE

398

VOLUNTEERING HOURS BY OLDER PEOPLE

Our mission

We bring generations together to build connected, inclusive and age-friendly communities

Our values

- We believe in purpose**
- We value delight**
- We are all learners**
- We make things happen together**
- We include everyone**

InCommon: Connect



At a glance

Our flagship programme brings together primary-age children and older volunteers in their local communities.

On each programme, we connect a retirement home or an independent living scheme with a nearby school across a 12 month period.

Together, older and younger participants take part in creative, educational activities, which facilitate intergenerational learning and fun.

This year, we delivered a hybrid programme: during the winter months, while the pandemic continued to pose serious risks, participants connected online, over the phone and through the post. In the spring, as Covid rates improved, they came together in-person.

Programme themes

LIFE IN THE PAST

Every year, we encourage our older volunteers to share memories from their lives with the young people on our programmes. Some told us about past jobs as seamstresses and lamplighters, while others reminisced about their hobbies as children, including conkers and cards.

NATURE & THE ENVIRONMENT

When we were able to return to in-person workshops, we met with children and older people outdoors. Participants planted seeds together and discussed ways to take care of the environment.

CELEBRATIONS

Together, our participants celebrated the Queen's Jubilee, while also sharing memories of other meaningful celebrations in their lives.

How we connected

This year, we adapted the programme in response to changing Covid restrictions and connected with participants in a range of ways.

INTERGENERATIONAL PHONE & VIDEO CALLS

Our older and younger participants got to know each other over regular phone and video calls, during which they took part in games, activities and discussions.

POST

Children and older volunteers sent one another postcards by way of introduction in October. The children sent more cards to residents to mark the festive season.

CRAFTS & CREATIONS

This year, we compiled and distributed two magazines full of children and older people's writing and artwork. At our workshops, our old and young participants made crowns to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee, and bunting to mark the end of the school year.

IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS

At the beginning of the spring term, we resumed our in-person workshops at sheltered schemes in and around London.

WELFARE CALLS

Our team made regular calls to our older volunteers to catch up and check in on their wellbeing during another difficult year of the pandemic.

Programme engagement



584

WELFARE CALLS



133

INTERGENERATIONAL
CALLS & WORKSHOPS



1187

ITEMS SENT
IN THE POST

165

OLDER PEOPLE

19

SHELTERED
SCHEMES

243

CHILDREN

12

SCHOOLS

Going green

In the Spring, we made a return to in-person intergenerational workshops. In order to lower the risk of Covid transmission, we took the decision to hold all of our sessions outdoors. This gave us the perfect opportunity to get out our green fingers and try some gardening!

We themed our first in-person workshop around nature and the environment, inviting participants first to share their favourite memories of being in the great outdoors, and next, to think about the ways we can take care of the natural world. Finally, residents supported the children to plant marigolds, nasturtiums and cress. Many of the residents we work with are keen gardeners, but for some of the children, this was the first time they had sown seeds and learnt about the stages of plant growth.



Celebrating the Jubilee

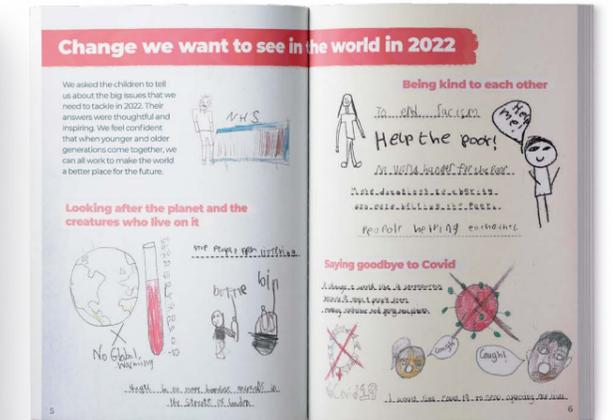
June marked the Queen's Jubilee, and InCommon joined in the celebrations. Lots of the older people we work with remember the Queen's coronation 70 years ago, as well as many of the significant events that have happened during her reign. Together, participants at our Jubilee workshop put together timelines of the last 70 years. Older people shared their memories with the children, recalling the invention of the internet, the rise of the Beatles, and the fall of the Berlin Wall. They also shared significant personal events, like their first jobs, their weddings, and the births of their grandchildren.



Next, participants were invited to imagine that they were made Kings and Queens of their local area for the next 70 years. They crafted crowns, awarded Special Honours, and issued Royal Decrees to improve their neighbourhoods. A royally good time was had by all!

Making magazines

Last year, we compiled Issue 1 of *The Children's Press* - a magazine made by children for their older neighbours. We distributed it during the winter lockdown, hoping to bring smiles to older people's faces at a difficult time.



This year, as we began to look tentatively towards the end of the pandemic, we invited contributions for Issue 2, which we themed around the future. In this issue, the children shared their personal goals for 2022, as well as writing about the wider issues that they felt we should be tackling in the year to come. Our young contributors envisaged a more supportive and sustainable world, in which we turn our backs on racism and end climate change. We hope the magazine's readers were left feeling that the future is in good hands!

Some months after we distributed the second issue of *The Children's Press*, one of its readers - an older person in one of our partnered schemes - suggested that we ought to compile another magazine. But this one would be made by older people for children. It would contain their memories and experiences, giving children more insight into what life was like in the recent past, and what it's like to grow older. This was how the first issue of *The Senior Press* came about - a magazine full of the words and wisdoms of older people living in retirement housing. Its contributors told us about their favourite memories, like collecting fresh eggs from chickens, dancing calypso with a steel band, and being a telegram boy in the 1940s. They also offered advice to future generations: be kind, try new things, look after mum and dad! Some contributors drew self-portraits, and one created a wordsearch containing 13 things which weren't in existence when he was 8-years-old (including Coco Pops & WhatsApp!).



We distributed *The Senior Press* to the children in our partnered schools at the end of the summer term; we hope they enjoyed reading about the lives of the older people in their communities over the holidays.

Noel

OLDER PARTICIPANT, CLARION HOUSING



Well, you get a bit excited and a bit nervous beforehand. You're not sure how the children are going to react to you. But they want to know about elderly people - about how we lived, what things were like when we were younger, our interests and hobbies, that sort of thing. And they're also a bit nervous, a bit apprehensive, trying to learn to speak up and tell us their names with confidence! So we try to reassure them and encourage them to come out of their shells. They've told us about their favourite foods, the jokes they like, what superpowers they would have. They told us about what they would change in the world - some of them were very thoughtful about that, talking about making poor people rich, and stopping people from dying.

During the pandemic, one of the little girls made me a lovely little cushion and a lovely little toy. She dropped it off here in a nice pink bag with a ribbon and a note. She said: "Dear Noel, me and mum and my neighbour all put some effort into making this rabbit and cushion for you. I hope you like it, I hope you're well and that we can see each other soon in person."

At one of the workshops in the Spring, there were some children who had never planted seeds before. I helped them with that, and they were so interested in learning how to do it. It makes me feel I'm doing something good for someone else. And the children can leave and say, "I met this old man who lived in the old air force base in Salisbury where they trained pilots."

“ You get a bit excited and a bit nervous beforehand... But the children want to know about elderly people - about how we lived, what things were like when we were younger. ”

“

Being with the children at InCommon's workshops is really special. It makes me feel like a schoolchild again!

”

I hadn't taken part in anything like InCommon's programme before - and I hadn't met any schoolchildren in 30 years! I like children and it was actually my dream to be a teacher, but I became an engineer.

Being with the children at InCommon's workshops is really special. It makes me feel like a schoolchild again! They are really caring; they ask me lots of questions and listen to what I say. They asked me about my husband and my family. Their visits also gave the residents the chance to come together again after Covid. We used to have fish & chips nights and Christmas lunches at the scheme, but that all stopped because of the pandemic. There have been dark times in the last few years, and doing activities with the children has brought me joy. I think all the residents feel that way - you can see on their faces that they're feeling happy and jolly when they're with the children.

I think about the workshops and the children often. They come into my mind when I water the garden and the flowers we planted with them. These are happy memories for me. I can't wait to see them again!



Zvart

OLDER PARTICIPANT, CLARION HOUSING

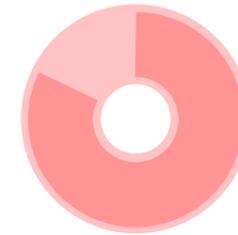


“ This project is really great for mum. I see her eyes light up when we talk about it. It helps her to remember lots from her youth. Once the children give her a little nudge, she does remember things and she does open up! ”

Daughter of an older participant, Rupert House



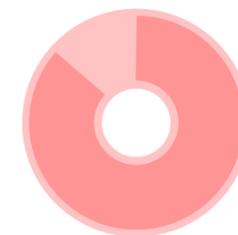
Feedback from older people



80% of older people report feeling happier after an InCommon call or workshop

“ This is a brilliant programme which encourages community cohesion. It lifted my mood and made me feel valued. ”

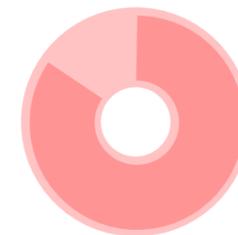
Older participant, Doliffe Close



87% of older people feel they have offered valuable support to children in their learning through taking part in the programme

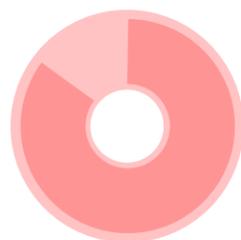
“ When the children come, it breaks up my day. They're such a pleasure to be around; they bring a ray of sunshine into The Oaks. Thank you for allowing me to be part of this enjoyable project. ”

Older participant, The Oaks



85% of older people would recommend InCommon to a friend

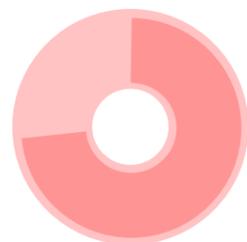
Feedback from older people & scheme managers



83% of older people feel that they have learnt more about young people today through taking part in the programme

“ I get anxiety, and sometimes I have to push myself to overcome that. This project has helped me with that – especially as we’ve been getting to know the same group of children at each session. ”

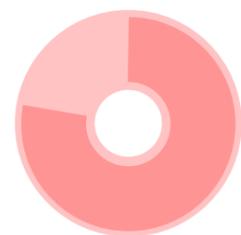
Older participant, Tidebrook Court



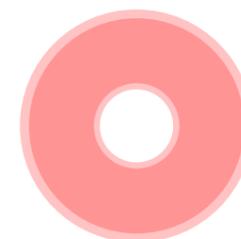
74% of older people feel more confidence in themselves after taking part in an InCommon programme

“ It was great to see the children completing their tasks and growing in confidence. As an ex-teacher, it was refreshing to be amongst it again. ”

Older participant, Rupert House



78% of older people feel a greater sense of belonging to a community after taking part in the programme



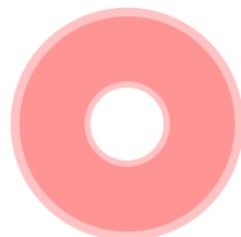
100% of scheme managers would recommend InCommon's programmes to another scheme

“ At Christmas, the children sang so enthusiastically and with such joy that the residents were just so, so happy and felt so lifted. ”

Scheme Manager, Hayley House



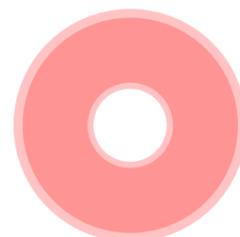
Feedback from teachers



100% of teachers agree that the programme supports or extends children's learning

“ Without a doubt this has been one of the highlights of our academic year. I hope we can continue the project and remain in touch with the residents. ”

Teacher, St Mary Cray Primary School



100% of teachers would recommend InCommon's programme to another school



“ The children have really enjoyed it. Especially those without grandparents or those who don't get taken to many places by their parents. It really helps bridge the gap between generations. ”

Teacher, St Paul's Slade Green



Feedback from children



“ I've learnt what old people go through, like losing somebody they love. It shows you to be grateful for what you have. ”

Child, 7-years-old, Liberty Primary School



“ Thank you Rose and Ivy for telling us about the olden days and what you think of the newer days. ”

Child, 8-years-old, St Mary and St Michael Catholic Primary School



I enjoyed making plants and meeting new people which were very kind and knowing what they did in the past and seeing what they like.

Thank you for letting us visit it has been amazing to get to know all the residents



Intergenerational social action

At a glance

Our Intergenerational Social Action programme is now in its second year. Building on the successes of last year, we've continued to bring younger and older generations together to tackle issues affecting their communities and to reimagine what their shared future might look like.

The lasting impact of the pandemic has meant that social isolation and intergenerational disconnection has been at an all time high. Our Social Action programme seeks to address this by providing opportunities for people of all ages to work together to solve the complex issues facing our society today.

Topics selected by the young people themselves have ranged from rising energy bills to environmental and mental health issues. In response to their

interest, we co-designed a programme of workshops and activities that was inclusive across the generations and enabled each participant to have a say on the matters at hand.

As well as our direct delivery, we've been providing support to our partner Community Ambassador Programmes nationwide, enabling a further 12 groups to increase their intergenerational activity.

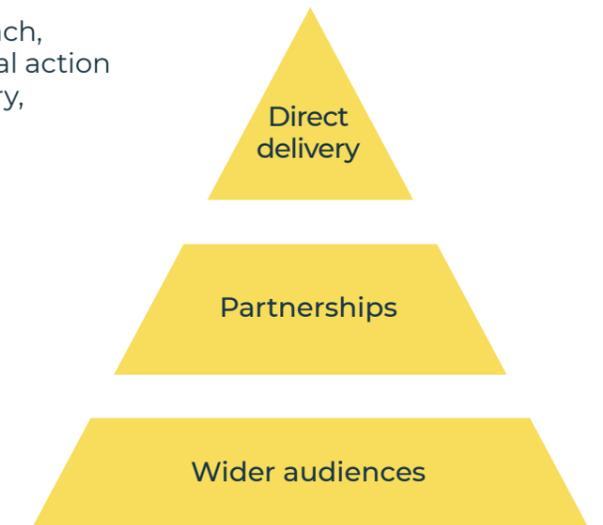
We'd like to thank our partners, Clarion Futures, the charitable foundation of Clarion Housing Group, and the #iwill Fund, a 50 million joint investment from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) for making this work possible.



How it works

We have adopted a 'design and cascade' approach, which sees our model for intergenerational social action disseminated across three strands: direct delivery, partnerships and wider audiences.

What does this mean in practice? We think design is best done in context, so we've started by designing and delivering our own resources, trying things out on the ground with participants. Then we've shared those methods and resources with partners, supporting them to engage younger and older people in social action in their own communities. Finally we've shared our learnings and approaches with wider audiences in the Housing sector and beyond.



Direct delivery

59
YOUNG PEOPLE

34
OLDER PEOPLE

3
YOUTH GROUPS & SCHOOLS

2
SHELTERED SCHEMES

Partnerships

33
SUPPORT CALLS TO

12
YOUTH GROUPS

200+
RESOURCES DISTRIBUTED



Handwarmers against heating costs

CASE STUDY: DIRECT DELIVERY

One of our biggest achievements this year was rolling out a nationwide intergenerational project, 'Hand Warmers Against Heating Costs', to raise awareness around the impact of rising energy costs on older people. In partnership with Age UK and their Cost of Cold campaign, we engaged both young and old on the issue. We subsequently supported young people to make microwaveable hand warmers for older people in their communities, while learning key campaigning skills in the process.

We began by recruiting a team of young people at InCommon's local youth club, Spotlight, to pilot the project. These young people brainstormed design ideas for the hand warmers, sewed them together and tested them in the microwave. They also came up with auxiliary campaigning ideas, such as letter-writing to MPs and poster-making to spread awareness. The young people at Spotlight then distributed their hand warmers to their older neighbours, alongside Age UK's resources about the

financial support available to older people who might be struggling. In return, a group of older residents also made some hand warmers to give back to the young people!

We were so impressed by the results of the project that we rolled it out to young people across the UK, sending nearly 200 hand warmer packs to more than 10 youth groups.

Age UK research has found that over a million older households in the UK are at risk of facing a choice between heating and eating. Talking about this together with the young people helped the older participants understand the wider impact of rising energy bills on their communities and the small ways they could have a say in creating actionable change. As one of the young people said: "I can see why this would be a nice thing for us to give to someone who might be struggling or if they have to walk because they can't afford transport."



After a year of Covid spikes and pandemic regulations, the young people we work with in East London wanted a chance to celebrate the relationships they've built with their older neighbours and finally meet them in-person with a big party!

Starting off with a Dragon's Den pitching-style workshop, the young people presented their party ideas and theme. We eventually settled on a Spring-themed celebration with stand-up comedy, speeches and accessible games like charades and Bingo. With personalised invitations and funky bunting designs, we were all set for a party in style.

The older people were delighted to host the party at Gawthorne Court and the day was a huge success. Lots of jokes, food and laughter were shared - we even had a surprise musical performance from our songstress resident, Lorna! The young people also had a go at interviewing the residents about their experiences growing up in East London and drawing beautiful portraits for our new InCommon magazine, *The Senior Press*. One of our bright young people said: "Seeing and listening to the elderly and their stories is so important. We should encourage all young people to do it more because we can learn lots from them."

Throwing an intergenerational party

CASE STUDY: DIRECT DELIVERY

Supporting our partners and wider audiences

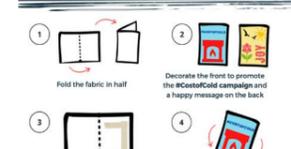


Alongside direct delivery, we have supported 12 youth partners up and down the country to connect generations through social action.

As part of this support package, we have developed and shared a range of resources that promote purposeful intergenerational connection in community contexts. These resources range from risk assessments to help partners to get projects off the ground, through to ready-made arts and crafts packs enabling young people to create gifts for local care homes.

We have also offered 1:1 support calls to youth groups, led workshops on intergenerational campaigning, and sent a monthly bulletin to 50+ stakeholders in the housing and community sectors, in which we have shared regular inspiration, ideas and funding for new intergenerational social action projects.

Some of the resources we've shared



HANDWARMERS AGAINST HEATING COSTS CAMPAIGN PACKS

We sent out nearly 200 packs to youth partners across the UK to make hand warmers and campaign against rising heating bills for their older neighbours alongside Age UK's resources.



INTERGENERATIONAL PARTY HOW-TO RESOURCE

Based on the success of our intergenerational parties, we put together a guide for youth groups to lead their own during the warmer months with tips and activities suitable for all ages.



WORKING WITH MIGRANT YOUTH RESOURCE

To celebrate Refugee Week in June, InCommon held an anti-prejudice workshop on Migrant communities in the UK. Off the back of this, our Programme Officer who has worked with Migrant youth in Greece has put together a resource for youth groups to better support their participants today.

Youth groups take action

CASE STUDIES: PARTNERSHIPS

Here is a selection of stories of intergenerational social action from some of our youth partners.

YOUTH DREAM SELSEY

Young people in Selsey have stayed in touch with older people during the pandemic, and delivered cakes and food parcels to older people who are lonely and isolated. They chose to use our bookmarks to send messages of LGBTQI+ solidarity to their older neighbours and help them build an understanding of LGBTQI+ identities. As a result of their interest, we connected them with Opening Doors, an LGBTQ+ charity for older people, which has led to a letter-exchange partnership happening next year.



ST JOHN'S DORKING

InCommon has been supporting the launch of the Peace Garden in Dorking and advised on an Intergenerational Party to bring together the local community. We sent over our Intergenerational Party resource and provided them with ideas and activities to ensure the launch of their garden was a great success.



POWER2

We held a hand-warmer making and introduction to campaigning workshop digitally with the fantastic young people at Power2! They wrote personalised letters to their local MP. We also helped connect them with a local group of older residents to distribute their hand warmers to.

Feedback from participants



I'm new to the building and it has been great to come to the sessions and mix with the other residents. It's helped me to feel happier, as I don't like being indoors all day. I would recommend this experience because it keeps your mind functioning and it's been lovely for me to see children as I don't see my kids that often.

Marcia, an older resident of George Padmore House, who lives with her partner and has just moved into the building. She is originally from Dominica.



The workshops with InCommon have helped us to engage with other people. When you live in sheltered accommodation, it gets to the stage where everyone says the same thing over and over again. These children give us new topics of conversation!

Mireille, a long-term resident of Gawthorne Court, who was born in France and moved to the UK to be with her partner, has lived in East London for the past 30 years. She loves to crochet, knit and keep active when she can.



It made me realise that young people are actually not that different than I imagined. I thought they would be different to how we were when we were young, but actually we're exactly the same! So curious and helpful and loving. I really liked that my perspective changed with the workshops.

Angela, a long-term resident at George Padmore House, who has mobility issues so cannot leave the house much. She enjoys watching the news.



Lorna

OLDER PARTICIPANT, GAWTHORNE COURT

The programme has been brilliant – I just wish the young people would come and visit us more!

I think the workshops are very good, they're very interesting and educational for both the children and the older people. The young people – the way they act and talk – bring us to the days of when we were young and they surprised me with how well behaved they are. They bring fresh ideas and really do help improve our lives. They even provide a new topic of conversation at our coffee mornings! I don't know how else to put it but they really make us feel useful and like you're contributing to society because when you get old it's just so easy to get in your head and have nothing to do. Moments like these bring joy to our lives.

One of my favourite moments was the party, we had a lot of fun – I even performed a song – I wish there was a bit more singing and dancing!



A portrait of Lorna by a young person from Spotlight



Being with the children at InCommon's workshops is really special. It makes me feel like a schoolchild again!



Scaling our work



At a glance

This year, we began to consider how we might expand the reach of our intergenerational work, making it accessible to people across the country.

We envisaged a model that would allow InCommon to support local organisations to deliver their own intergenerational activities, adapted for their communities.

In the spring, we built and began piloting a digital platform that enables primary schools and retirement homes to access our resources online, and to schedule and run their own workshops. This platform seeks to make intergenerational projects easier to set up and deliver, as well as more rooted in their local areas.

This work has been made possible thanks to funding from Innovate UK's small business research initiative (SBRI), which aims to support businesses to provide innovative technological solutions to the public sector.

The pilot

In March 2022, we developed the first iteration of the online platform which provides schools and retirement homes with everything they need to run an intergenerational visit smoothly.

We have partnered with Clarion Housing Group to deliver the pilot and are testing the platform in 6 of their social housing communities. This has involved building relationships with 6 of their LiveSmart schemes, independent living schemes for over-55s, and matching them up with 6 local primary schools. We then onboarded the teachers and scheme managers onto the platform, giving them access to the tools and resources they need to make intergenerational visits happen - from risk assessments and registers through to session plans and activity handouts. Along the way we've been gathering insights on how the platform is working, evaluating how well it meets the users needs' and how useful it is, and what we can change to make it better.

Before the summer holidays, the first intergenerational visit organised through the platform took place at one of our pilot locations.

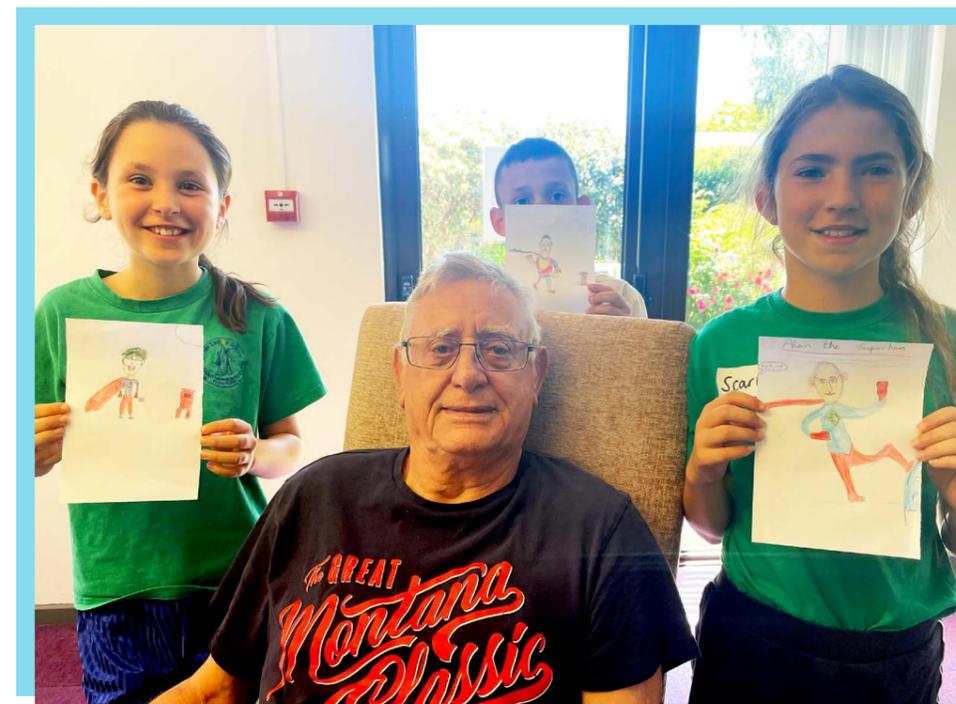
On June 14th, residents of Colmer Court retirement home and pupils from Southway Junior School in Burgess Hill took part in an intergenerational visit. There was a great turnout, with 24 people coming together for fun, games and educational activities.

Some of the activities included human bingo and the children drawing their older friends as superheroes! One of the residents said her superpower was knitting and the children drew a knitted scarf as her cape and knitting needles as her hands with wool shooting out.

The first visit ran really smoothly and everyone really enjoyed it. One of the residents shared that it was the best afternoon they had in a long time. Some of the children said they were really glad they didn't go swimming and went to visit the older people instead!

Following this first visit, the residents of Colmer Court were invited to the end of year school performance at Southway Junior School. Five residents attended and the relationship between the school and the scheme has grown even stronger.

We're looking forward to seeing the impact of the platform grow over the next few months as more schools and schemes nurture intergenerational connection in their communities.



Testing the platform

COLMER COURT & SOUTHWAY JUNIOR SCHOOL

The year ahead



Another year is underway at InCommon.

Our Connect programmes have begun, and our Social Action work has entered its third cycle. Meanwhile, we are continuing to develop our digital platform, giving more communities capacity to run their own intergenerational programmes.

With our charitable status in place, we are in the process of recruiting for new trustees, with whom we will soon review our strategy and look to shape the future of the organisation. We aim to expand support for our work and open up new funding avenues, while retaining something of the social enterprise mindset

that we started out with: we will continue to be innovative, lean and able to respond to the needs of our beneficiaries promptly and effectively.

We're looking forward to everything that the new year brings – but most of all, to creating more intergenerational connections in inclusive, age-friendly spaces throughout our communities.

InCommon's 2021-22 Team

Directors & Co-founders

Laura Macartney
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Michaela Tranfield

Trustees

Kirsty Allerton
Hector Smethurst
Krishna Hathi

Thanks & Acknowledgements

Thanks to all of our younger and older participants.

Our housing partners and funders:

Clarion Housing Group, Orbit Homes, Guinness Housing Association, The Mercers' Company Almshouses, The Peabody Group, Wandle Housing Association

Our school partners: Belleville Primary School, Christ Church Erith Primary School, Hatfield Primary School, Holmleigh Primary School, St Mary Cray Primary Academy, St Mary and St Michael Catholic Primary, Lessness Heath Primary School, Liberty Primary School, St Paul's Slade Green Primary School, St Winifred's Primary School, Walnut Tree Walk Primary School

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